

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 11, 2016

Col. Edward P. Chamberlayne, Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Baltimore District
10 South Howard St.
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Col. Chamberlayne,

Through your early days commanding the Baltimore District Corps of Engineers, we trust you have been struck by the commitment of the people of Maryland to the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and the native oyster population that is essential to a healthy Bay. We greatly appreciate all the long, hard work of the Baltimore District towards this goal.

With that in mind, we were concerned by reports that you were asked by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Secretary last month to delay award of an end-of-the-year contract to build the next eight-acre phase of the planned oyster reef in the Tred Avon River. This largely federal project is a critical piece of and the next step in the state's commitment to restore oyster populations in five Maryland waterways under the 2014 multi-state Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement with the federal government. This work has been planned in a long and open process, and we understand the Corps made changes to this specific project that were agreed to by all parties as recently as this spring.

We are concerned by this proposed delay for several reasons. Recognizing that work to rebuild oyster reefs in the Bay has to occur during seasonal windows, even a short delay in award of this contract could delay this reef restoration for more than a year, and delays on this one section of the Tred Avon work could delay the overall project and reduce its cumulative benefits. Given that the Maryland Congressional Delegation worked hard to secure these limited federal dollars at the request of the State, we fear the Corps and other federal agencies may lose use of funds for this critical work, or spend it in other states.

Restoration of the Chesapeake Bay, and particularly plans to restore our native oyster population, has been as well-studied, coordinated and designed as any environmental project in the nation. We understand the DNR request was to delay the Tred Avon project until a study of the first five years of Bay fisheries restoration work is completed this summer. In addition, we have read reports of concerns by some watermen about the materials used and the placement of rocks in previous work. Obviously, we want to see contracts carried out as planned regarding material and placement. Any mistakes should be corrected as soon as possible. And we are all looking forward to the five-year report and its findings, but it was meant to be a snapshot of ongoing long-term efforts, not a report on four-and-a half years' work. We fully support efforts by all parties to study and improve restoration practices, but this must happen on a constant and

ongoing basis. Restoration of the Chesapeake Bay is a long-term undertaking, but one that unites Marylanders like no other.

We urge you to work with the State to see this specific project and other works to restore Bay oyster populations move forward as quickly as possible. You can count on our strong, continuing support for your efforts to this end.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator

cc: Governor Larry Hogan
Secretary Mark J. Belton, Department of Natural Resources
Mr. Peyton Robertson, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office